

Bhutan Pathway Tours

Day 1 – Land at Paro Airport

Drive to Thimphu

The following are the places of interest suggested on Day 1 in Thimphu post lunch.

1) Textile Museum

Established in 2000, this is another of the new theme museums in the city. It is dedicated to the rich skill of the Bhutanese weaver, primarily women. Literally, women were ones who clothed the family before availability of machine made fabrics. The museum has a good collection of samples including rare pieces and antiques, some belonging to the Royal Family. The Royal Collection in the Museum consists of the Crown of the First Druk Gyalpo (His Majesty, Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck) and Namza (clothes of the Royal Family). Since its establishment, the museum has organized competitions to encourage weavers as well as pay tribute to the rich old tradition and skills.

2) Folk Heritage Museum

Established in 2001, this is an interesting museum built in the form of a very traditional Bhutanese house. The house itself is over 150 years old. The museum is a walk through the rural traditions, and ways of living of the Bhutanese. Special exhibitions can be organized here on select subjects pertaining to Bhutanese heritage. Demonstrations of traditional ways of extracting oil, brewing traditional spirit, husking rice etc. and a buffet of traditional food items can be arranged with prior notice.

3) Zorig Chusum School (Thirteen Traditional Arts and Crafts)

This school teaches the techniques of traditional painting, sculpture, engraving, silver smithy, carving, weaving, calligraphy, etc.

4) Traditional Paper factory

This factory uses the bark of two tree species in the manufacture of traditional paper (“deh-sho”): dhenap (Daphne) and dhekap. The factory also uses all sorts of waste papers including cardboard boxes to recycle them into paper sheets that could be used as packing material or to make containers, envelopes toys etc.

5) Tashichho-Dzong

Also known as the „Fortress of the Glorious Religion“, it was initially built in 1641 and later rebuilt in its present form by King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck in 1965. The Dzong houses the main secretariat building with the Throne Room of His Majesty the King of Bhutan. The National Assembly Hall is housed in a modern building on the other side of the river from the Dzong. During the warmer summer months, the monk body headed by His Holiness the Je Khenpo resides in the Dzong.

Return to the hotel in the evening at about 6.30 pm. The guests could also spend some time shopping at the various shopping options in Thimphu for handicrafts etc.

6) Takin Zoo

The zoo houses the Takin, which is the national animal of Bhutan. This is a distinctive species by itself, with the body of an antelope and a goat’s head.

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In the evening the guests could shop around in Thimphu or take leisurely walks around the main town.

Day 2 – Thimphu- Punakha Day Excursion (Via Dochula)

On the way to Punakha, you drive through the Dochula Pass (Start the day at 8.30 AM after breakfast)

The Dochula Pass is just over 10,000 feet. Here there are 108 chortens called “Druk Wangyel Chorten,” with colorful prayer flags surrounding the area. If the sky is clear this location provides breathtaking view of the mountain ranges extending into Tibet, and an opportunity to take photographs of the snow capped mountains.

There is also the „Druk Wangyel Lhakhang“ dedicated to the memory and achievement and glorious victory of the 4th King of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck. The essence of this Lhakhang is the two tier museum gallery that brings to life Bhutan’s ancient spiritual legacy and the reign of the Wanchuck Dynasty.

Punakha Dzong (12.00 – 13.00 hrs)

Built strategically at the junction of Pho-Chhu and Mo-Chhu rivers in 1637 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal to serve as the religious and administrative centre of the region the Punakha Dzong has played an important role in Bhutan’s history. Damaged by four catastrophic fires and an earthquake, the Dzong has been fully restored by the 4th King, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck. Punakha was the erstwhile capital of Bhutan, before it was moved to Thimphu.

Currently the Dzong is the winter residence for the holy Monk Body of Bhutan, headed by His Holiness the Je Khenpo.

Chime Lhakhang (15.00 -16.00 hrs)

The Chhimi Lhakhang, situated on a hillock in the centre of the valley, is dedicated to Lama Drukpa Kuenley, who in the late 15th century used humour, songs and outrageous behavior to dramatize his teachings and due to this is also known as „The Divine Madman“. This temple is also known as the temple of fertility. It is widely believed that when couples who do not have children pray at this temple, they are usually blessed with a child very soon. It is about 30 minute walk across fields from the main road to the temple. Drive back to Thimphu in the evening.

Over Night – Thimphu

Day 3 – Thimphu - Paro (Taktsang Hike)

Start the day at 0830hrs after break fast, drive to Paro

1)Taktsang Monastery

One of the most amazing and important pieces of architecture in Bhutan, Taktsang Goemba defies logic, gravity, and reason. Legend has it that this Cliffside was where Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) landed on the back of a flying tigress, bringing Buddhism to Bhutan from

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Tibet. To avoid the hot sun an early start is advisable for the 2 hour climb, via the cafeteria, to the tiger's nest viewpoint. Descend steeply, and then climb up to the monastery, passing a waterfall.

2) Drukgyel Dzong: This dzong, with a picturesque village nestling below its ramparts, was built by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in 1646, to commemorate his victory over the Tibetan invaders. Though largely destroyed by fire in 1951, the towering outer walls and central keep remain an imposing sight. On a clear day, there is a splendid view of Mt. Jomolhari from the approach road to Drukgyel Dzong.

Day 4 – Paro Sightseeing

3) Ta Dzong: On a ridge immediately above Rinpung Dzong is Ta Dzong, built as a watchtower to protect Rinpung Dzong. ("Ta" means "to see" in Dzongkha, so the watchtower of a dzong is always called a "Ta dzong"). On account of their function, watchtowers are always round in shape. In 1968 Paro's Ta Dzong was inaugurated as the National Museum, and now holds a fascinating collection of art, relics, religious thangka paintings, Bhutan's exquisite postage stamps, coins and handicrafts, together with a small natural history collection.

4) Rinpung Dzong: Built in 1646 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, the "fortress of the heap of jewels" stands on a hill above Paro township. The approach to the Dzong is through a traditional covered bridge (called the Nemi Zam) and then up a paved stone path running alongside the imposing outer walls. The valley's annual springtime religious festival, the Paro Tsechu, takes place in the courtyard of the dzong and on the dance ground on the hillside above.

5) Kyichu Lhakhang: This lhakhang, built in the 7th century, is one of the two oldest and most sacred shrines in Bhutan (the other being Jambey Lhakhang in Bumthang). Kyichu Lhakhang is composed of twin temples. The first temple was built by the Tibetan king, Songtsen Gampo in the 7th century. In 1968, H.M. Ashi Kesang, the Queen Mother of Bhutan, arranged for a second temple to be built alongside the first one, in same style.

Day 5 – Departure.